

6301 - Wilderness Characteristics Inventory

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Unit Name and Number: Unit Name CA-080-149-1 Ibex Spring

Results of Analysis:

Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A

Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Conclusion

☐ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

☒ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

Prepared by:

Team Members:

Brad Mastin, Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM Barstow FO
Birgit Hover, Realty Specialist, BLM Barstow FO

Approved by:

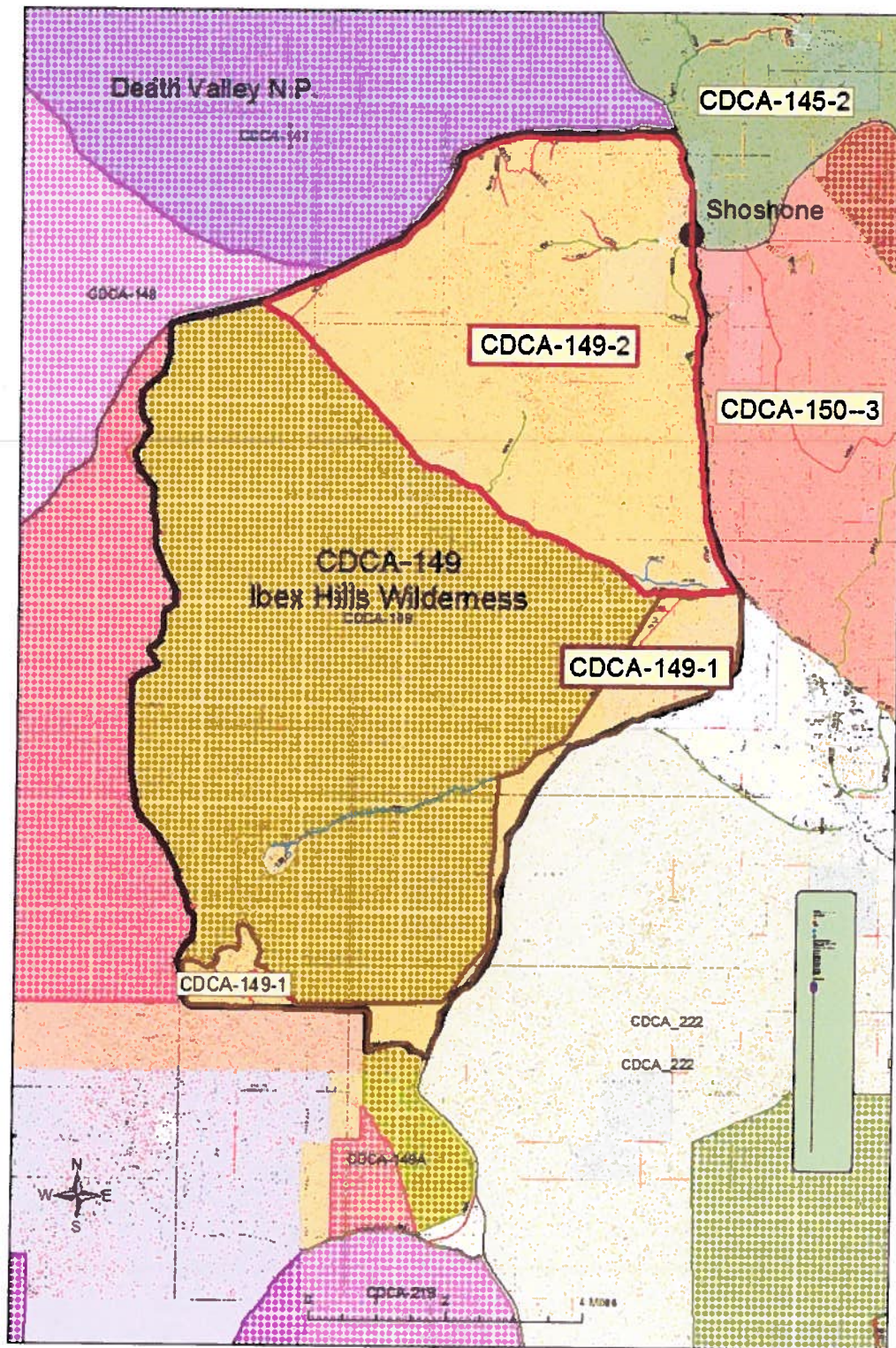
Name: 

Title: Barstow Field Manager

Date: 10/3/14

This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-2.

Appendix B - Map 1 Overview
Barstow WIU Area 149-1



[illegible]

Inventory Name/Unit Number: Unit Name CA-080-149-1

Form 1

Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?

Yes

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory files, California Desert Conservation Area

Inventory Unit Name(s)/Number(s): CA-080-149 Ibex Hills

Map Name(s)/Number(s): USDI BLM California Desert Wilderness Final Inventory, Dec. 1979

BLM District(s)/Field Office(s): Barstow Field Office

2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics:

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory files, BLM Barstow FO
1988 CDCA-149 Ibex Hills Wilderness Study Report

Unit#/ Name	Size (historic acres)	Natural Condition? Y/N	Outstanding Solitude? Y/N	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Y/N	Supplemental Values? Y/N
149	39,111	Y	N	N	Y
149-1	2,600	N	Y	Y	Y

The 1979 study found Man's works dominate the landscape along the east side of the area. Areas in the northern, eastern and southern portions were excluded to form a core natural central area. The natural condition is noted as being affected by numerous roads, extensive mining, and sporadic developments. An attempt was made to identify an area that was natural, but then the report went on to explain why it still didn't qualify as wilderness.

The 1988 wilderness study report for Ibex Hills, CDCA-149, used a boundary configuration that was carved from the original 1979 unit. No lands were recommended for wilderness in any pieces of CDCA-149. Both the 1979 and 1988 reports indicate this area does not meet the wilderness feasibility requirements because of extensive mining, roads, powerlines, structures and various impacts.

Form 2

Documentation of Current Wilderness Inventory Conditions

Unit Number/Name: CA-080-149-1 Ibex Spring

(1) Sufficient size: Yes.

Acreage: Approximately 2,600 acres

Boundaries:

This unit has a linear bent finger shape, and is split into 2 separate parcels. The first is a linear stretch of public land along Highway 127. The short northern boundary is Furnace Creek Wash Road, then the border runs south Highway 127 to Ibex Pass. The southern boundary is a well constructed and used dirt road access the mines in the Ibex Mtns. The second parcel is a small irregular shaped section of public land a mile west of Ibex Pass. The parcel is bordered on the north and east by Ibex Wilderness, the East and south by Death Valley NP.

Description of Current Conditions

Land ownership: Entirely public land. Most of north-east corner of this unit was recently acquired as a part of a long-term land status project by non-profit partners active in this area. The BLM recently acquired through donation the majority piece of land forming a triangle between Highway 127, Old Spanish Trails Highway and Hot Spring Road. Until recently there these were patented lands owned by a large scale Borax mining company. They were acquired by the Nature Conservancy in the early 2000s and donated to public lands. The remaining land never left the public domain.

Location: South-central Inyo County, California; between Highway 127 and the Ibex Wilderness; immediately north of the San Bernardino County Line. Due east from Death Valley

Topography: This area is spread out in a strange finger type configuration covering a wide range of topography due to its linear shape. The unit runs north from Ibex Pass at the southern most point, to the drainage at the low point of the valley. At Ibex Pass the lands sit at the base of the Ibex Hills, and include several washes and fingers which gently transition to relatively harmonious bajada draining north-east to the Amargosa River. The lands around Ibex Pass include a high degree of caliche and form many steep walled washes containing numerous natural cavers.

Going north the ribbon of lands gradually transition to a sandy loam composition with a high amount of decomposed granite, silts and clays. In the north at the low point of the unit the soils turn to ancient mud deposits in a variety of shapes similar to hoodoos. Here the land is more convoluted with isolated hoodoos rising like islands and isthmuses from the desert floor. The very far north-eastern corner of this unit spreads out across the flat alkali lands forming the broad level marsh lands known as Grimshaw Lake. The lands in this area include portions of the alkali flat adjacent to the Amargosa River. The lands along Highway 127 near the Amargosa River contain some of the historic ruins of the old Amargosa Borax Works. This is the same

operation that operated the famous 20 Mule Team hauling borax from Death Valley to the rail line in Daggett. High quality clays are mined for cosmetic purposes in this area.

The landforms at the north end of this unit are similar to Area 150-3. Running down from the base of the Ibex Mountains to the Amargosa River is a series of parallel drainages. The landscape goes from the steep and hard rocky surfaces of the Ibex Mountains to level soft alluvial deposits around the river. At the base of the mountains the soils include increasingly more decomposed granite and fines. Gradually these gravelly soils give way to alluvial deposits that have formed a series of mud hills adjacent to the river. Geologist hypothesis the mud hills were formed from ancient deposits of mud, thousands of years ago when Tecopa Basin was part of large inland body of water.

Vegetation features: Scarce, thin, stunted, short. In the Ibex pass area there is a thin, sparse, creosote scrub vegetative community. This includes sparsely scattered pear cactus, hollybush, and Mormon Tea. The vegetative community grows into a denser and more fully creosote scrub community in the lower elevations.

Major human uses/activities: The most popular activity here is passively viewing the scenic beauty of this area from the adjacent Highway 127. The Ibex Pass area is pocked with large mining disturbances that occupy the center of the unit. The mines appear to have been extracting talc and the exposed white material lays in stark and visible contrast to the surrounding natural landscape. There are 2 well constructed roads running up through the unit to the mines. These obviously continue to receive a moderate amount of regular use.

This unit provides a few of the only available roads in a large roadless area dominated by wilderness in all directions. Therefore, this unit attracts a variety of desert exploration, primarily beginning with motorized access. Uses here include hiking and desert exploration; to the north in the badlands area visitors enjoy riding off-road in the smooth bare hills using motorized vehicles; 4x4s, quads, motorcycles, side-by-sides, the family sedan and whatever else capable of driving off-road. Visitors often get stuck and the area is closed to off-road travel.

(2) Natural condition: No. This area was excluded in all the previous studies because of the mining activity and numerous roads. The mines are no longer active, and the roads have eroded. However, overall the area is dominated by the sights and sounds of man's work. This includes the large abandoned mine disturbances, a large active open pit clay mine, the constructed access roads, powerlines, paved highway, dirt roads, microwave tower, and popular motorized dispersed camping sites.

Human intrusions are noticeable even in the rugged pieces of the far southern and northern segments. The landform is sculpted by large washes, folds, dips and rises that break up the natural edges and angles, yet the human intrusions also lay across the landscape, sometimes in an abstract pattern such as the mines.

(3) Outstanding opportunities for solitude: N/A

(4) Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation: N/A

(5) Supplemental values: N/A